LUMBER RIVER BASIN

The Lumber River Basin is a rich ecological expanse of flat land, gently rolling hills and swamp waters. Part Sandhills but mostly Coastal Plain, the basin is a flatwater paddler's dream and a naturalist's wonderland.

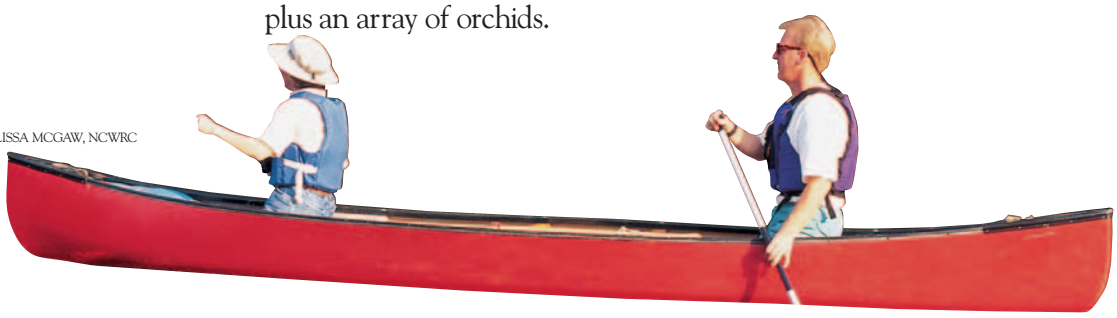
KEN TAYLOR, NCWRC

Lumber River, Robeson County

Even though it is named for the Lumber River, the Lumber River Basin is actually four distinct river systems that include the Lumber River, the Waccamaw River, the headwaters of the Little Pee Dee River and a system of small coastal rivers that empty into the Atlantic.

The Lumber River is one of the state's four Natural and Scenic Rivers, and an 81-mile portion of the river is designated a National Wild and Scenic River. In bestowing the federal designation, the National Park Service determined the Lumber River has "outstandingly remarkable" resources, which include recreation, fish, wildlife, scenery and botany. The wildness of the Lumber and Waccamaw rivers draws canoeists and other paddlers by the thousands.

The Waccamaw River flows from Lake Waccamaw, the most biologically diverse lake in North Carolina and one of the most species-rich lakes in the Western hemisphere. It has 52 fish species, 11 species of snails and 15 species of mussels and clams, many of them rare and endemic to the lake, meaning they have been found nowhere else on earth. The Waccamaw's watershed also includes a large portion of the Green Swamp. In wet savannas of this swamp, scientists have recorded the highest density of small-scale plant diversity in North America — more than 40 species in a single square meter. Some of these intriguing plants include insect-eaters such as flytraps, pitcher plants and sundews, plus an array of orchids.



MELISSA MCGAW, NCWRC

profile:

Total miles of streams and rivers: 2,233

Total acres of lakes: 8,966

Total acres of estuary: 4,306

Municipalities within basin: 51

Counties within basin: 9

Size: 3,336 square miles

Population: 304,579 (2000 U.S. Census)

Biodiversity

Biodiversity refers to all of the organisms (plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and ecosystems that can be found in a region. A high level of biodiversity indicates that natural systems are in balance and that the environment is healthy. We depend on biodiversity for many natural goods and services, such as the pollination of crops and wild plants, the cycling of air and water, the regeneration of soil and the development of new foods and medicines.